



TEACHER PREPAREDNESS IN THE IMPLEMENTATION OF EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT EDUCATION IN BOMET COUNTY, KENYA

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Abstract:

Childhood education is crucial in the life of a child because it lays the foundation of intellectual and physical development. The government policies and research theories emphasizes plenty of instructional resources that are well sourced, managed, selected and used for the purpose of quality ECDE Curriculum implementation. The purpose of this study was geared towards the analysis of the teacher's preparedness, attitudes and use of the instructional resources in ECDE centers in Kenya. The research was based on the theory of curriculum innovations. The study adopted a descriptive survey design and was carried out in Bomet Municipality Zone, Bomet County. Simple random and stratified sampling techniques were used to select respondents who comprised of a target population of 84 head teachers and 180 pre-school teachers to get the sample size of 25 head teachers and 54 pre-school teachers from the selected ECDE centers. Data was collected using questionnaires, observation checklists and an interview schedule. The instruments for data collection were piloted to validate the tools and determine their reliability. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistics, this included frequencies and percentages. Data was presented in the form of graphs, charts, and tables. The study provides useful information for the education policy makers to produce relevant learning resources and course books for the ECDE teachers. The Government of Kenya (GoK) can use the findings to consider funding the pre-school education and improve teacher preparedness and attitudes towards the use of instructional resources. Teachers can use the findings to adjust and improve their teaching methodologies in the use of

instructional resources. The major findings of the study showed that teachers were prepared in the use of IR; however, the status of the available materials in the centers was either inadequate, obsolete, dilapidated or unsuitable for use.

Keywords: teacher preparedness, childhood education, development education

1. Introduction

Several psychologists have argued and proved that school days are supposed to be the happiest moments to the learners. Truly, a child who misses education is a child lost. Montessori (1870-1952) has argued that children learn well through a variety of materials and toys. These materials evoked sustained interest and attention to young children. Further still, the leading child psychologist Piaget called the period which Montessori training usually begins as the “Pre-operational” period. Here, the child is able to manipulate, transform and perform other mental operations only when it manipulates the object concretely. Montessori (1952) further argued that holistic development in children is fostered through the use of manipulating learning materials, playing and training exercises. According to her, children at the age of 6 and below possess “absorbent minds”, with very active senses which equip them with skills to learn more quickly and easily than any other subsequent period in their lives.

The Early childhood learning is an important system not only in Kenya, but also in other countries of the world (Young, 2012). According to the International Encyclopedia of Education (1985) it is referred to as a variety of types of provisions for young children designed to support and stimulate their intellectual development. A child receives a good start in life through the promotion of quality care, nurturing and safe environment (Froebel, 1963). According to many scholars and psychologists, aspects of ECDE learning curriculum which acutely require instructional materials include the cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains. The study carried out in Botswana (1993-1995) found out that children who had been in pre-schools under well prepared teachers in terms of training were mostly still in school and the dropout figures were lower. The results were also obtained in other countries like Israel, Ireland, Colombia, Jamaica, Trinidad and even Kenya (Bernard Van Leer Foundations, 2002). There is therefore need to carry out research in the analysis of teacher preparedness, attitude and use of instructional resources in the implementation of ECDE curriculum in Kenya.

Therefore, young children learn well by interacting with the real materials in their learning environment. The ECDE learning becomes operational through the use of a variety of well selected, relevant learning resources, practical skills and abilities are well taught by the help of resources. Truly, too much teacher talk is boring and ruinous

to the pupils. From NACECE Report (2006), learners require a child friendly environment where a teacher sets the learning corners full of resources as per the theme or activity content. Materials are changed or renewed from time to time as children explore and learn freely in indoor and outdoor activities.

This can only be effective when teachers are well trained and prepared in the selection and use of appropriate variety of instructional resources (Ongus, 2003). The main purpose of ECDE learning in Kenya is mainly to help the child to acquire language and communication skills; manipulative and numeric skills in concept handling, reading and writing skills. The child should also acquire positive attitudes towards education; grow physiologically, morally, spiritually and emotionally. If instructional resources are acquired and effectively utilized by well-prepared teachers, pupils will be ready to smoothly move from the pre-school stage to the primary school level without difficulties.

The belief that early learning begets later learning and success, just like early failure begets later failure, has been validated in both economic and educational research (K.I.E., 2002). During ECDE learning, children enjoy non-serious play directed activities and it is the duty of the pre-school teacher to turn these non-serious selves into serious actors. This can only be achieved through the use of relevant instructional resources because psychologists have proved that optimum learning takes a multi-sensory approach (Adeyanju, 2003). This is supported by Kariuki (2002) who argues that teaching should fire the enthusiasm of the child, motivating it to desire to learn and be active. He further emphasizes this by arguing that to learn a thing in life through doing is much more developing, cultivating and strengthening than to learn it merely through the verbal communication of ideas. ECDE requires a variety of instructional resources and highly trained and motivated teachers to prepare the tender children for class one.

Latest developments have seen a global endeavor to prioritize early childhood care and education as a foundation for later learning and development, as evidenced by the Global Guidelines for Early Childhood Education and Care in the 21st Century (Association for Childhood Education International/World Organization for Early Childhood, 1999). Such efforts are a response to a variety of complex social issues and economic trends. These forces, which are referred to here as "complex family stressors," include, but are not limited to, societal changes due to industrialization, the increased number of women with young children entering the labor force, families with two working parents, a rise in the number of single parents, and the demise of traditional systems of child care and extended family support systems (Cheruiyot & Kosgei, 2008).

2. Statement of the Problem

Early Childhood Development Education policies stress the use of plenty of relevant instructional resources to develop the totality of the child (NACECE, 2006). Learning has been ineffective in most ECDE centers with children having difficulties in mastering reading, manipulative, numeric and interpersonal skills despite the several studies on instructional resources (Cheruiyot and Kosgei, 2008).

Cave and Mulloy, (2010) emphasized the importance of teacher preparedness in terms of professional records preparation, academic and professional training levels of the pre-school teachers for effective ECDE implementation. Concerns have been raised over the state of the ECDE programmes with regard to the negative teacher attitudes towards ECDE learning, specifically in the selection and use of instructional resources due to low remuneration, lack of time and demotivation (DICECE, 2013). If the situation is left to continue, the child's holistic development cannot be guaranteed in the 21st Century and beyond. Hence, this study sought to investigate on teacher preparedness in the implementation of early childhood development education in Bomet County.

2.1 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to evaluate teacher preparedness in the implementation of early childhood development education in Kericho Municipality, Bomet County.

3. Objectives of the Study

The specific objectives of this study were:

1. To assess teacher preparedness in the use of available instructional materials in the teaching and learning in ECDE centers in Bomet County.
2. To explore the attitude of teachers and its influence on the selection and use of instructional resources in ECDE centers in Bomet County.

4. Research Questions

The study sought to answer the following research questions:

- i) Does the teacher preparedness influence the use of the available instructional resources in the teaching and learning in ECDE centers in Bomet County?
- ii) What is the attitude of teachers on the selection and use of instructional resources in ECDE centers in Bomet County?

5. Significance of the Study

The research provides useful information for the Kenya Institute of Education (KIE) and Ministry of Education (MOE) to produce relevant instructional materials and course books for the pre-school education in Kenya.

The Quality Assurance and Standards Officers (QASOs) can use the study findings to mount country-wide workshops and in-service courses for the DICECE trainers of the ECDE teachers on their teaching methodologies and new emerging issues in the curriculum as they train the teachers to acquire the skills and knowledge to effectively select and use the instructional resources.

The Government can use the study to consider funding and equipping the ECDE centers with adequate instructional resources for effective teaching and learning. The GoK through the Teachers Service Commission (TSC) can use the findings to employ the ECDE trained teachers to boost their morale in curriculum implementation.

The findings can inspire the managers and sponsors of private ECDE centers in the country to broaden their scope in instructional resource acquisition to equip their pre-school centers with appropriate and relevant resources for the effective curriculum implementation.

The findings can enhance parent's commitment in the provision of ECDE relevant to their children through provision of quality and adequate instructional materials through cost sharing and improvisation to enable the children extract knowledge through discovery.

6. Theoretical Framework of the Study

This study was based on the theory of implementation of curriculum innovations advanced by Scott et al (2009). They argue that the degree to which a curriculum is implemented is a function of the extent to which conditions are present during the process of implementation. These conditions are: the attitude of the implementers, recipients as well as other stakeholders of the new curriculum; the support provided by the management staff; the availability of facilities and equipment; the degree to which members of the school organization are clear and aware about the scope and content of the curriculum; the extent to which members of the school organization possess the capabilities and competencies needed to carry out the process of curriculum implementation; existing organizational arrangement and the willingness to expend the time and effort for the implementation of the curriculum.

According to Scotts et al (2009) for implementation to take place, there are certain conditions which should be fulfilled for sustainable curriculum change namely: the results of this study are significant to the education stakeholders, school administrators

and the government in guiding them to formulate policies that may enhance efficient utilization of instructional resources in ECDE centers.

Conceptual Framework

VARIABLES

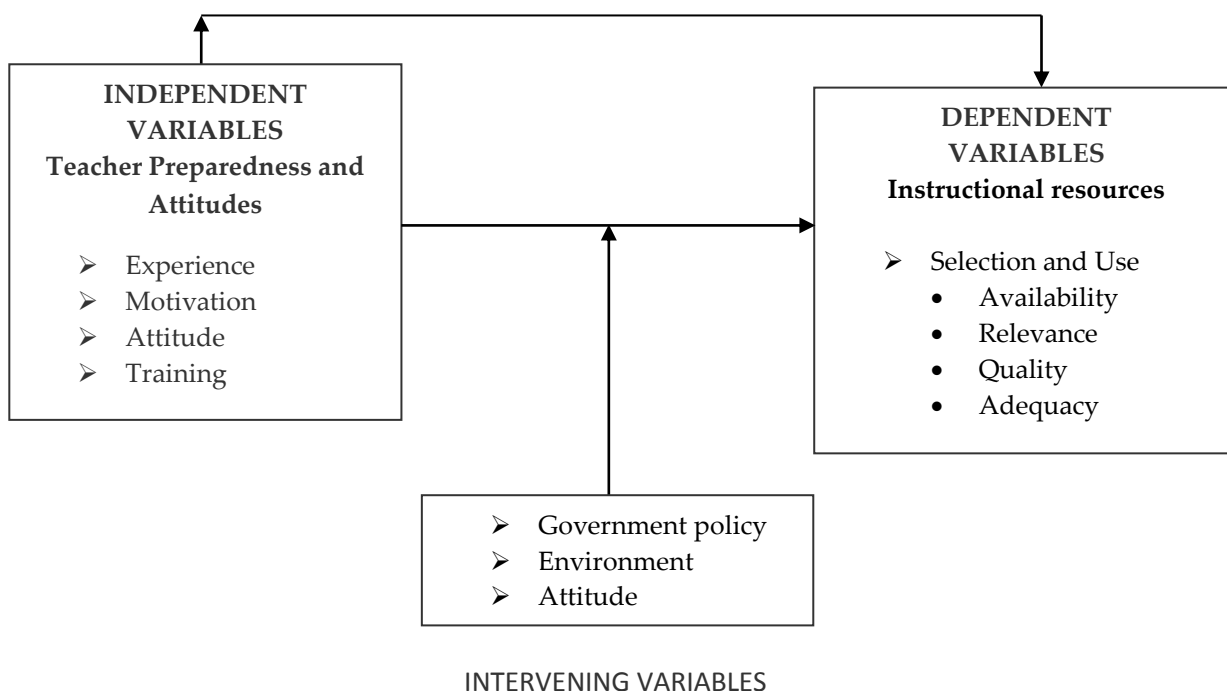


Figure 1: Relationship between Teacher Preparedness, Attitudes and the selection and use of Instructional Resources

This study adopted the Conceptual Framework shown in Figure 1, showing the interactions between the variables: teacher preparedness, attitudes and use of instructional resources in the ECD Education curriculum implementation. The inputs are the independent variables: teacher attitudes, preparedness in terms of training, motivation, experience and competence. It also entails the mastery and delivery of the content, selection and use of appropriate instructional resources, class organization and control. Competent teachers do plan, acquire, use and maintain the learning resources. The dependent variables were the instructional resources utilization in terms of availability, relevance, adequacy, quality and the suitability to the learners.

7. Methodology

This study utilized a mixed methods methodology where both qualitative and quantitative methodologies were used and adopted a descriptive survey research design. Questionnaires, interviews and observations were used as methods for data collection. The study population was 264 subjects. There were 84 ECD centers in Bomet

Municipality Zone of which 30 were public and 54 were private with 180 pre-school teachers (DICECE Kericho, 2013). The study targeted all the head teachers and pre-school teachers at the ECDE centers in the Zone.

7.1 Sample Size and Sampling Procedures

The sample size consisted of the following respondents: 25 head teachers and 54 pre-school teachers in Bomet Municipality Zone that is 30% of the target population. Samples were picked from the ECDE centers using stratified and simple random sampling techniques. This was chosen to delimit the research and gather sufficient data within the cost and time constraints.

Data from questionnaires were analyzed in frequencies, means and percentages using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Qualitative data from the questionnaires was analyzed in themes and categories identifying similarities and differences that emerged. The SPSS was used to generate frequency distribution tables. A descriptive statistical method was used and adopted to calculate the percentages and means. The researcher drew conclusions concerning teacher preparedness and their attitude in the use of instructional resources in teaching and learning in ECDE centers, basing on the research objectives.

7.2 Assessment Teacher Preparedness in the use of the available Instructional Materials in ECDE Centers

The first objective of this study was to find out whether teachers were prepared in the use of the available instructional materials in teaching and learning in ECDE centers. To achieve this objective, the respondents were asked to respond on several items that the researcher considered important. They included; use of instructional resources, whether they had enough training on selection and use of instructional resources, make instructional resources for learners, plan for use of instructional resources, whether the use of instructional resources enables one to summarize voluminous concepts and learning contents, often use of teaching and learning resources, attended training and workshops on preparation and use of instructional resources. This was in an attempt to answer the first research question. *“Does the teacher preparedness influence the use of the available instructional resources in the teaching and learning in ECDE centers?”* The data on table 1 and figure 2 gives a summary of the respondents’ information

Table 1: A table showing an assessment of teacher preparedness in the use of available Instructional Resources

Item	Agree		Undecided		Disagree		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Teacher preparedness in the use of instructional resources	75	94.9	4	5.1	-	-	79	100
Have enough training on selection and use of IR	62	78.5	11	13.9	6	7.6	79	100
I make IR for my learners	69	87.3	11	13.9	6	7.6	79	100
Plan for use of IR	65	81.2	6	7.6	8	11.2	79	100
Use of IR enables summaries of volumes of concepts	70	88.6	-	-	9	11.4	79	100
Often use teaching and learning resources	61	77.2	5	6.3	13	16.4	79	100
Attended training on preparation and use of IR	47	59.5	1	1.3	31	39.3	79	100
Have attended seminars and workshops on teaching and learning in ECDE centers	43	54.4	1	1.3	35	44.3	79	100

From table 4.1 above majority of the respondents, 75 (94.9%) agreed that they used the available IR in the teaching and learning in the ECDE centers and those undecided were 4 (5.1%). A good number 62 (78.5%) agreed that they had enough training on the selection and use of IR while 6 (7.6%) disagreed.

Data collected indicated that in ECDE centers without sufficient IR, the teachers improvised as indicated by 69 (87.3%) and 11 (13.9%) were undecided. Those who planned to use IR were 65 (81.2%). The respondents, 70 (88.6%) agreed that use of IR made it possible for them to cover several volumes of concepts. This shows that concepts were easily understood by children as argued by NACECE (2006). It was vivid that 61 (77.2%) of the respondents agreed that they often used IR, while those who were undecided were 5 (6.3%) and 13 (16.4%) disagreed. The respondents 47 (59.5%) agreed that they had attended a training on preparation and use of IR while a good number 31 (39.3%) had not and only 1 (1.3%) were undecided.

About half of the respondents 43 (54.4%) agreed to have attended seminars and workshops on the selection and use of IR in ECDE centers, 1 (1.3%) was undecided while 35 (40.3%) disagreed. Whaley (2005), noted that workshops and seminars are effective in improving the teacher preparedness, attitude and use of IR in the ECDE curriculum implementation.

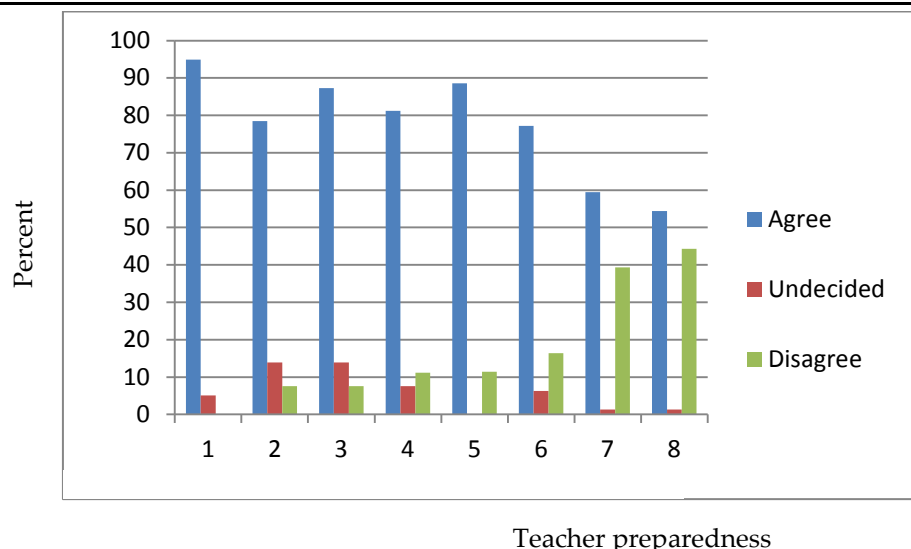


Figure 2: A graph showing an Assessment of Teacher Preparedness in the use of the Available Instructional Materials in ECDE Centers

Key

1. Teacher preparedness in the use of instructional resources
2. Have enough training on selection and use of IR
3. I make IR for my learners
4. Plan for use of IR
5. Use of IR enables summaries of volumes of concepts
6. Often use teaching and learning resources
7. Attended training on preparation and use of IR
8. Have attended seminars and workshops on teaching and learning in ECDE centers

7.3 Attitude of teachers and its influence on selection and use of instructional resources in ECDE centers

The second objective of this study was to explore the attitude of teachers and its influence on the selection and use of instructional resource in ECDE centers.

To achieve this objective, the respondents were asked to respond to several items; use of instructional resources is boring, have enough training, I make instructional resources for my learners, plan for use of instructional resources, use of instructional resources allow interaction of children, the use of instructional resources enable one to overcome classroom limitation and use of instructional resources make children enjoy their learning. This was in an endeavor to answer the second research question *“What is the attitude of the teachers on the selection and use of instructional resources in ECDE centers?”* The results were presented in the Table 4.5 below.

Table 2: Attitude of teachers

Item	Agree		Undecided		Disagree		Total	
	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
Use of IR is boring	0	0	4	5.1	75	94.9	79	100
Have enough training	62	78.5	11	13.9	6	7.6	79	100
I make IR for my learners	69	87.3	4	5.1	6	7.6	79	100
Plan for use of IR	65	82.3	6	7.6	8	10.1	79	100
Use of IR allow interaction of children	73	92.4	1	1.3	5	6.3	79	100
The use of IR enables one to overcome classroom limitation	76	96.2	1	1.3	2	2.5	79	100
Use of IR make children enjoy learning	71	89.9	6	7.6	2	2.5	79	100

A good number of preschool teachers 75 (94.9%) disagreed with the assertion that use of IR was boring in the teaching and learning at their ECDE centers.

It showed a strong desire to use IR as supported by Ololube (2006). In terms of training, their perception on the use of IR improved as 62 (78.5%) agreed while only 6 (7.6%) felt it never contributed at all.

It showed that those who made IR for their learners were 69 (87.3%), a clear sign of interest in providing IR for their children, those who never bothered to make IR were 6 (7.6%) which is negligible. This is a positive sign that teachers are willing to teach using IR.

Before teaching, those who planned to use IR were 65 (82.3%) while those who taught without were 8 (10.1%). Effective teaching was achieved by making appropriate plans and using relevant IR (MOE, 2006).

Sharing and interaction amongst learners was noticeable as shown by 73 (92.4%) respondents. This showed concern on the part of teachers that socialization was improved when IR were used as noted by Lynch (2007).

With use of IR by learners, a majority 76 (96.2%) respondents agreed that it made them easily use a classroom effectively, whether small or big. Learners became quite involved on the task at hand. A total of 71 (89.9%) respondents said that IR made children enjoy coming to ECDE centre and learn what was being offered through hands-on activities (Cook, 2002). Only 2 (2.5%) respondents saw no connection between IR and active attendance by learners.

On the attitude of teachers and its influence on preparedness of the selection and use of instructional resources, 75 (94.9%) agreed that it has a life contribution. None disagreed with the assertion. For learners to enjoy all activities seventy one (89.9%) respondents agreed that use of instructional resources was necessary while those who disagreed were 2(2.5%) while only 6 (7.6%) were undecided. The findings are in agreement with Eduser (2009) who noted that teachers' attitudes influence the selection and use of IR in a teaching and learning situation.

This is reflected on table. 4.5. Cook (2002) supports the view that effective teaching and learning cannot take place without essential instructional resources.

7.4 Teacher preparedness in the use of available instructional materials in the teaching and learning in ECDE

The first objective of this study was to assess teacher preparedness in the use of available instructional materials in the teaching and learning in ECDE centers in Bomet County. According to Musau (2004), an instructional material is an object or means of communication process that stores and distributes human experience or knowledge, therefore the totality of the information carrying devices. He continues to say that utilization of the instructional materials in teaching is associated with the function of the teacher as the manager of the instructional process. It is important for the teacher to arrange the mechanics of the presentation and also plan to make the materials meaningful to the learners.

Results presented in this thesis indicated that majority of the teachers agreed that they used the available IR in the teaching and learning in the ECDE centers. This is in agreement with Indimuli et al. (2000) who state that concrete and proper use of teaching/learning aids often gives concrete representation to most abstract ideas and thus makes their meanings clearer.

Instructional resources aids are therefore essential and useful tools because they promote understanding of concepts and principles, they enrich and enliven teaching, they concentrate interest and attention, they speed up communication and thereby make the teaching process more efficient and effective. They also make pupils remember more of what they learn.

On the training and selection of IR, majority of the teachers are in agreement that they attained enough training in the selection of IR. Bennars (2003) observed that instructional resources are very important in the teaching of any subject. Teachers are trained to prepare and use instructional resources because they are essential ingredients in teaching and learning. Developmental psychologists stressed the role of concrete operational experience for children. When instructional resources are well used, there is maximum learning achieved by each individual learner. Today, much more improvement in the development and use of instructional resources has been done because of the advancement of technology. Teachers select, plan and present their instructional materials basing on many factors that can help them realize their instructional objectives (Berl, 2005).

The findings showed that teachers improvised instructional materials, this is in agreement with Ntale (2003:48) who says that teachers ought to be resourceful and design materials which can allow their learners achieve in a lesson. The respondents

also agreed that the use of IR made it possible for them to cover several volumes of concepts.

In all schools visited, the most adequate IR were chalkboards, furniture and syllabus copies. While other materials like handouts, models, charts, electric media, realia, playground and other IR were inadequate in centers (Table 2). Libraries, store and electric media were not available as cited by the respondents. Interviews conducted to head teachers confirmed the same. Most of the head teachers agreed that they had sufficient chalkboards, charts, pictures, textbooks, models and realia, while toys, photographs, models and outdoor play resources were unavailable in quite a number of the centers.

7.5 Attitude of teachers and its influence on the selection and use of instructional resources

The findings of the study showed a good number of preschool teachers either enjoyed using IR or plan to use IR in their lessons. They agreed that they had enough training on the use of IR which is contrary to the findings of Anyanwu (2005) who says that many of the school teachers are ignorant of using those instructional materials and induction course, lecture: and seminars are not organized in teaching profession as they are organized in the civil services to up-grade knowledge and to facilitate the use of sophisticated instructional materials. Teachers also do not make maximum use of the few instructional materials at their disposal, because many of them do not have the knowledge of operating them.

Use of IR made pupils enjoy learning and increases attendance. The attitude of teachers towards teaching pupils was enhanced by use of IR with enough training, using IR improves and in case they were not available, teachers improvised. It can be stated that the attitude of teachers and its influence on selection and use contributed significantly to learning and teaching of pupils in ECDE centers.

8. Conclusions

1. Teachers reported that they were well prepared on the use of available IR in teaching in ECDE centers in Bomet Municipality Zone. They however noted that the status of available instructional materials, equipment and facilities were inadequate, obsolete, dilapidated and unsuitable for use. The availability of instructional materials to a large extent is influenced by the teacher's preparedness.
2. Majority of the teachers had positive attitudes about the selection and use of IR; however, some of them were concerned about the state and inadequacy of the IR in the ECDE centers in the Zone. The study findings in this research indicated

that pre-school teachers did not maximize the use of instructional resources in teaching and learning in ECDE centers.

9. Recommendations

Based on the findings from this study, the following are recommended:

1. There is need for the government to fund ECDE centers for the purchase of relevant JR. Also, the government should introduce capacity building courses which would improve the creative skills of pre-school teachers to develop IR for effective ECDE curriculum implementation.
2. Based on the conclusions, the study recommends that ECDE teachers be employed by the government, with a clear and effective scheme of service like other teachers at other levels. This will motivate and instill in them a positive attitude towards selection and use of JR in teaching/learning in ECDE centers.

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